

BRIEFS

DEL. HOUSEHOLD HAZWASTE PROGRAM BEGINS IN JANUARY

Delaware residents will have a permanent place to dump household hazardous wastes starting in January after the state's Solid Waste Authority approved plans Oct. 27 to begin a regular, state-wide collection program, according to a state official.

After testing several different household hazardous waste collection programs, the state has decided to operate four collection centers, which will be open one Saturday each month. The collections will take place at the Delaware Reclamation facility in New Castle, the Pine Tree Coriers garbage transfer station in Towns End, the Cheswood garbage transfer station in Cheswood, and the SWA landfill near Georgetown. Call (302) 739-5361.

NEW BOOK LOOKS AT NIMBYISM AND HAZWASTE FACILITY SITING

The Brookings Institution, a nonprofit think tank in Washington, has published a book on hazardous waste facility siting proposals in North America and on community reaction to such sitings, according to a Brookings written statement.

Beyond NIMBY: Hazardous Waste Siting in Canada and the United States, by Barry Rabe, examines the politics of facility sitings in both countries. Citizen opposition to proposed siting is leading to serious waste management problems, according to Rabe. Call (202) 797-6105.

EPA EXTENDS COMMENT PERIOD FOR ALBION LANDFILL TO DEC. 4

EPA Region 5 has extended the deadline for public comment on proposed cleanup plan options for the Albion-Sheridan Township landfill in Albion, Mich. The comment period deadline was extended an additional 30 days from Nov. 2 to Dec. 4, according to Region 5.

Region 5 has recommended several options to deal with contamination at the site, including the removal and off-site disposal of hazardous and liquid waste drums, a flexible membrane liner cap, an active collection and flaring of landfill gas, and groundwater monitoring. Call Heidi Valetkevitch at (312) 886-1303.

Remediation

US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5



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GAO: EPA Should Improve Superfund Cleanup Cost Recovery Program

Since program began, \$1.2 billion of \$8.7 billion has been recovered

Even though the number of Superfund settlements has increased over the past eight years, EPA hasn't been very successful in recovering cleanup costs from potentially responsible parties (PRPs), according to a new General Accounting Office report.

In fact, EPA has recovered only \$1.2 billion of the \$8.7 billion spent on the Superfund program through 1993, according to "Superfund: EPA Has Opportunities to Increase Recoveries of Costs." The study was released Oct. 28, according to GAO.

The total cost to clean up all 4,500 Superfund sites in the country could be near \$75 billion, the Congressional Budget Office reported in January. So far, Congress has approved \$15.2 billion for the program, according to EPA.

Cost recoveries have been limited by several factors, most of them within EPA's control, the GAO study found. The problems include excluding large amounts of indirect costs from the recovery program, it said. Of the \$8.7 billion spent so far on the program, \$2.9 billion, or 33 percent, are indirect costs excluded from EPA's cost recovery regulations, GAO reported. EPA will probably not pursue another \$1 billion, or 11 percent, because responsible parties cannot be identified or cannot afford to pay their share, it added.

Another problem is the absence of useful management goals and the information nec-

essary to track the program's progress, according to the report. Although EPA has established some goals for its cost recovery program, GAO called them "limited" and "unambitious." The goals allow the agency to "easily meet its target even though the actual progress achieved is limited," the report said. As an example, GAO reported that EPA has consistently met its targets for administrative actions, meeting 242 percent and 321 percent of their targets in 1991 and 1993 respectively. The study noted that these targets measure only the number of actions taken, not the progress EPA is making in recovering its cleanup cost.

GAO acknowledged that it knew EPA is under resource constraints, but it added that improving this part of the program depends to a larger extent on increased attention and commitment from the agency's management.

One EPA staffer called the report "pretty balanced," and said it correctly identifies several problem areas in the program that need to be resolved. But he noted that GAO did not find any major faults with the way the programs are run. "They would like to see some of the structural things resolved," he added. The study was requested by Reps. John Dingell (D-Mich.), chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and Al Swift (D-Wash.), chairman of the committee's transportation and hazardous materials subcommittee. The lawmakers asked GAO to provide information on EPA's settlement and recovery costs program and to identify what inhibits the agency from recovering these costs.

— Matthew Dembicki

EPA Cracks Down On Hazardous Waste Combustion Units

In EPA's third cluster enforcement action since unveiling its combustion strategy in May 1993, the agency filed complaints or settled alleged violations with 32 hazardous waste combustion facility companies, according to an EPA written statement.

The actions, announced Nov. 15, involve \$7.5 million in assessed penalties under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The actions were brought by EPA and state environmental agencies in Utah, Georgia, Michigan, and South Carolina against hazardous-waste burning incinerators, and boilers and industrial furnaces. The cluster initiative is part of a continuing agency effort to protect human health and the environment from risk associated with improper burning of hazardous waste, according to EPA Administrator Carol Browner. "Our vigorous enforcement efforts notify industry that we expect strict compliance with hazardous waste combustion regulations," Browner said.

The actions cover a variety of alleged violations, including exceeding feed rates and emissions standards, operating without automatic feed waste cutoff systems, and not properly analyzing wastes prior to combustion, EPA said. Of the 32 actions, 22 involved settlement agreements totalling \$3.3 million in civil penalties. The remaining 10 involved administrative complaints and \$4.2 million in assessed fines. Hazardous wastes burned in combustion units often contain toxic organic chemicals, heavy metals, chlorine and chlorides, all of which is harmful to the environment in sufficient quantities, EPA said.

— Ellen S. Carey